

**MINUTES
OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
EDINA CITY COUNCIL HELD AT CITY HALL
MAY 30, 2000
7:00 P.M.**

ROLLCALL Answering rollcall were Members Faust, Hovland, Johnson, Kelly and Mayor Maetzold.

Mayor Maetzold stated the purpose of the special meeting was to allow the City Council to discuss the potential referendum and the joint agreement with the School District concerning the proposed park improvements. He noted that on May 16, 2000, a public hearing was held allowing testimony and that numerous letters have been received from residents.

Mayor Maetzold proposed to the Council that they consider postponing the referendum allowing further study of Edina's Park and Recreation needs and exploring other options available to meet those needs. He offered this because the proposed referendum was a very large and complex initiative and Mayor Maetzold felt it important that the City have consensus before proceeding. He stated that in reviewing the public testimony and letters received on the issue it was obvious there was support for the improvements, but there are several reservations. Mayor Maetzold noted these reservations center principally upon the gymnasiums and the proposed physical location of the gymnasiums. Mayor Maetzold said he hoped that after further study a consensus could be achieved upon the best solution.

Mayor Maetzold added that not all options have been explored regarding gymnasiums. He said the Community Center Field House was focussed on due to its convenient locale and to the lower cost of building additional gyms at that site. He said that on a very cursory basis other possible solutions were identified, but were determined to be very expensive so they were not investigated in detail. Mayor Maetzold suggested that the needs and possible solutions be re-investigated to determine if other options could be cost effective to meet the need for more gymnasiums, or if perhaps it will be found that the high cost options would be supported.

Mayor Maetzold noted that a new state law had removed the pressure the School District had been under to renovate the Kuhlman Field bleachers for safety reasons. Recently, the State legislature adopted a law granting more time to complete these renovations. Incorporating the safety renovations with the park improvements would have saved costs, but now there would be more time before the District must complete the upgrades to the bleachers.

Mayor Maetzold made a motion that the referendum be postponed and a more in depth study of the City's Park and Recreation needs and possible options be undertaken. Member Johnson seconded the motion.

Member Kelly said he agreed with much of the Mayor's statements. The proposed joint park improvements are a very ambitious plan. He added they are something he was committed to and thinks that once completed they will be a terrific asset for the community. Member Kelly stated he supported the project and its location. However, he also agreed it made sense to postpone the project and study other options to make absolutely sure that this was the best solution to a genuine need of the community. Member Kelly said it was very important that a

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project was not forced upon citizens if they did not support it. He suggested that further study be conducted to make certain the project would be built in the correct location. Member Kelly added that the opposition needs to be addressed. Lines of communication must be opened so that if a better location cannot be found the people opposing the project can be convinced that the proposed location was the only viable option left and was the best solution for the community. Member Kelly said he hoped the opposition could be convinced not to be selfish in their concerns, but to look for solutions that solve community needs and the fact that they may be inconvenienced will be accepted because of the greater community needs being met. Member Kelly reported that when he campaigned for Council the need for additional gym space was heard from everyone he spoke with young children. Parents told him children should not be competing so late at night, because it was not good for them and it was not right. Member Kelly said he supports the postponement, but noted he was not going to let the project die, indicating his intent to keep working with the Council and the community to bring the issue to fruition.

Mayor Maetzold suggested that if the Council agrees with the postponement that a blue ribbon panel be formed representing all interests to find the solutions to the City's Park and Recreation needs. He suggested that this panel be formed and begin work immediately.

Member Kelly agreed with the Mayor's suggestions. He said that one of the most troubling things he heard at the public hearing was the opposition of the Soccer Association. Here was one of the largest representatives of the City's sports community and one most challenged with facilities, opposing a net gain in soccer fields. Member Kelly said he thought the whole Association needs to look seriously at their leadership and direction. If you have participants who do not have fields and the Association leadership was opposing an initiative proposing several fields to the program, he suggested there was something wrong.

Member Faust said she supports more gymnasiums. She said she believed that the community needs more gymnasiums. Member Faust thanked all the people who spoke and wrote letters to the Council expressing their positions on the proposed joint project. She said this does make a difference and helps the Council in their deliberations. Member Faust said she also believes one other issue should be looked at when further study was undertaken. The referendum as proposed was three times larger than any previous referendum held in the City of Edina. The last referendum was supported by 75% of the people, and included the seniors. Member Faust noted the many seniors had indicated via letters their concern over the cost of the proposed referendum. She challenged the Council and "Study panel" to review the cost issues to see if costs could be reduced somehow.

Mayor Maetzold said that alternative funding sources could be investigated during the study. Member Faust asked that priorities be re-evaluated to ascertain whether all the components really need to be included in a referendum.

Member Hovland said that the entire matter had been undertaken with the most noble intentions in an attempt to react to various needs expressed by different elements of the Edina community. In an effort to determine how to meet those expressed needs, the Council toured various facilities in the metro area. They came away with the conclusion that community centers would involve a significant level of taxpayer subsidization to operate. Member Hovland said the Council with these concerns about tax increases, and both construction and

operating costs, attempted to balance solutions against the expressed needs. Conceptually, a joint enterprise was designed between the City and School District to maximize the efficiencies of operation and keep costs in line as much as possible. He said the work of two staffs expanded to a larger committee encompassing the City Manager, Members Hovland and Kelly, (and later Member Faust), and also members of the School Board. Member Hovland said they needed to know, as they went along and defined the various elements of the scope of the project, how the School Board felt about it. He commented to the School District representatives, that the Council appreciated the Board stating what was important from an elemental standpoint. Preliminarily the community center was looked at because it involved the different efficiencies that the committee hoped to create for the tax payers. Member Hovland said that in the true democratic process stake holders in the neighborhood have now expressed their concerns. He reported that what he has heard from these groups was that the concern was not so much the components of the joint project, but the location of the components. Member Hovland concurred that setting up a task force to identify the location of the various components would be very helpful to the process. The legislature has removed some pressure with their one year delay on implementation of the bleacher renovation. Now everyone should have an opportunity to participate in the process. Member Hovland expressed concern about the location of the field-house. He said that if a facility should be located somewhere other than at the Edina Community Center; built on City owned property and run as an enterprise; then the stand-alone operating costs versus the incremental operating costs of a joint City/School District project must be determined. He reported that what he has been hearing from the citizens was that location was more important than cost. If the City has to run the facility and this costs more money, then go ahead and build the facility in the correct location, not to be intrusive into a neighborhood or a school. Member Hovland said this issue needs to be reviewed. Secondly, the soccer facility, the dome and artificial turf at Kuhlman Field must be studied. He reported the soccer association came in at the eleventh hour. Since they are such a large group, postponing the referendum will give an opportunity to define better the best place for this facility. Member Hovland said he believes a better location than Kuhlman Field can be found. Investigate whether it would be feasible to look at the Braemar Dome north of the ice rink, where a new facility would not bother a neighborhood and would have better access. Member Hovland said he was also concerned about the proposed cost relative to its impact on taxpayers. Noting the significant number of high value homes occupied by empty nesters Member Hovland said he wanted to make sure the financial burden was fairly spread. Perhaps using different financing mechanisms could be investigated, i.e., user fees.

Member Johnson said he agreed with his colleagues regarding postponing the referendum. He added that while on the School Board there was a great deal of opposition from the community, who felt that the Board would be detracting from other elementary schools by establishing the French Immersion Program. Opponents to establishing the French Immersion Program felt the Board would be serving only a small interest group, but could possibly detract from other elementary schools by drawing away people who were particularly interested in education. Member Johnson reported that this had been a difficult decision for the Board to make, but was done and has been borne out to be the right one, because the French Immersion School has been very popular. In fact, it is populated by a group of activists who are concerned about the education of their children, and they have been very active. Member Johnson said that in this case; pointing out the irony, those very activists who were the beneficiaries of the School Boards decision to do what was in the best interest of the School

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District and the greater community by establishing another magnet for the Edina community, which would attract people here, by showing the strength of the public school system; are now among the leaders for whom the NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) principle is alive and well. Everyone that the Council has heard from felt the project was laudable, that there was a need for the vast majority if not all the components of the project. But not in my back yard. Member Johnson said he found it rather ironic that things have switched and the opposition was now from the people for whose benefit the French Immersion Project was started. He said he agreed that the next step should be to figure out a way to accommodate the needs of the vast majority of the citizens of the community who want these developments. If the Council cannot find a better place that was more accommodating to those who have expressed their specific objections then the Council will have to make the tough decisions whether the needs of the majority of those who want these development override the interests of those who feel they would prefer to have the development elsewhere. He concluded that he supported the mayor's motion.

Mayor Maetzold thanked the Council and stated that he believed this could be made into a win win proposition when the process was completed. He thanked the Edina School Board and District for working with the City. He reported this was a new type of partnership and the community will benefit from it by ultimately having some fine facilities.

Mayor Maetzold called the question on the previously stated motion to postpone the referendum.

Ayes: Faust, Hovland, Johnson, Kelly, Maetzold

Motion carried.

There being no further business on the Council Agenda, Mayor Maetzold declared the meeting adjourned at 7:20 P.M.

City Clerk